

would work out. The government itself would pay the providers less. But the plan then also makes it possible for the providers to recover if they want by charging the recipients more. The insurers and providers with whom the recipients would deal would not be required to absorb the cuts. Rather, to the extent that competitive pressures permitted, they would be free in various ways to pass them on; the recipients then would have to absorb them.

Our own sense is that, as the bills are written, this risk is too great. That's particularly the case because the Republicans would decimate Medicaid, the backstop program for the needy elderly and disabled. The house the Republicans are building has plenty of roof over cost but not enough floor under care. Much has been made in recent days of the deals that House Speaker Newt Gingrich is said to have struck with the American Medical Association and other provider groups to ensure their support for the plan. The assorted deals are small potatoes compared with this structural defect in the plan. It has to be fixed to make the plan worth passing.

The plan has, while we're at it, one other provision that would cost billions of dollars while serving no good purpose and ought to be killed outright. We have in mind the medical savings accounts the proposal would permit. Instead of paying a recipient's bills or giving the recipient a fixed amount to help buy an insurance policy or enroll in a managed care plan, the government would put that amount in a savings account in the person's name, partly to buy a high-deductible, so-called catastrophic insurance policy, the rest to be used for other purposes. After a certain amount had accumulated, if the recipient didn't need or want to use the money for health care he could use it to take a vacation, buy a boat—you name it.

Healthy and better-off people who could afford the risk would be drawn to this. The government would be putting more in their accounts per year than they currently take from Medicare, thus adding to costs and leaving less to care for the sick and less well-off. It's a skimming operation, and it ought to be dropped without a second thought.

SOLVE MEDICARE PROBLEMS IN A BIPARTISAN WAY

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, the Medicare trustees have told us that Medicare is going bankrupt. Let me quote from their own words: "We strongly recommend that the crisis presented by the financial condition of the Medicare trust funds be urgently addressed on a comprehensive basis."

This is a quote from the Medicare trustees. Six of them, four of them appointed by President Clinton, three of them Cabinet-level positions. We believe that their recommendation should be followed, and we are doing that.

We really need to address the Medicare crisis. Please join us in addressing that crisis. Please stop medagogy. Please join in the discussion which is now just beginning. The passage of this bill today is just one of a number of steps in which this bill can be modified so that it becomes ever a better and

better bill. Please join us in solving this problem for senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is morally reprehensible to frighten senior citizens for political agendas.

VOTE "NO" ON MEDICARE BILL

(Mr. BENTSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to the Medicare Pilfering Act of 1995 that the Republicans are bringing to the floor today.

The Republicans think they can fool the American people by dressing this bill up in Orwellian language and calling it the Medicare Preservation Act of 1995.

But the American people have caught on that they really are pilfering Medicare to pay for a tax cut for the rich.

Under the Republican plan, you reduce Medicare spending by \$270 billion and you only extend the life of the Medicare hospitalization trust fund to the year 2006. Under the Democratic alternative, you reduce Medicare spending by \$90 billion and you also extend the trust fund to the year 2006. Even the Republican staff of the Ways and Means Committee admit that the two bills achieve the very same goal.

So what is going on here? If cutting \$90 billion and cutting \$270 billion achieve the same goal, why do the Republicans insist on cutting Medicare by \$270 billion and what happens to the \$180 billion difference?

The answer is that it is being used to pay for those \$245 billion in tax cuts that we do not need and cannot afford. No matter how the Republicans disguise it, there is no escaping the fact that they are cutting Medicare to pay for tax cuts.

That is irresponsible. That is wrong. That is unfair to America's senior citizens. Vote "no" on the Medicare Pilfering Act of 1995.

JUST THE FACTS ON MEDICARE

(Mrs. VUCANOVICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. VUCANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, Sergeant Joe Friday used to say "Just the facts, ma'am." Well, here are just the facts on Medicare.

Fact: According to Clinton trustees, Medicare is going bankrupt in 7 years and Congress should do something this year to avert this disaster.

Fact: The Medicare Preservation Act will save the Medicare system, while giving choice to seniors that they have asked for time and time again.

Fact: No senior will be forced into an HMO. HMO's are simply an option for seniors, as is traditional Medicare, medical savings accounts, and provider sponsored networks.

Fact: The Medicare Preservation Act increases individual benefits for sen-

iors from \$4,800 per year today to \$6,700 per year in 2002.

Fact: By law, Medicare savings can be used only to save Medicare.

Fact: The Medicare debate has become a game of who are you going to believe: Those across the aisle who knew about the impending bankruptcy for years and did nothing? Or those who have taken the challenge and made the promise to save Medicare from an untimely death. These are just the facts.

□ 0930

DO NOT TRADE HEALTH CARE FOR TAX CUTS

(Mr. MILLER of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, today is the day that the Republicans trade the health care of our seniors for tax cuts for the wealthy. Today is the day that the Republicans take on the best health care system in the world, the least expensive health care system in the world, in terms of overhead, and the most comprehensive health care system in the world for senior citizens, and today they trade that in for tax cuts to the wealthy.

Mr. Speaker, they do so by taking away benefits that seniors have. They do so by making sure that seniors will not be able to pay and to purchase the same health care levels and benefits that they have today 5 years from today. They will not be able to arrange for the same level of health care. And so we leave our seniors stranded so that we can provide tax cuts and capital gains cuts to the wealthiest individuals in this country.

One of my seniors from Pittsburg, CA wrote and said, "Congress must understand we seniors built this country and we deserve better. You should not do this to us."

MANAGED CARE WORKS IN MEDICARE

(Mr. BLUTE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BLUTE. Mr. Speaker, perhaps we will have to wait a year or two until our friends on the other side of the aisle come over to our way of thinking. Similarly, we are now hearing that President Clinton is saying that the 1993 tax increase was wrong and not the right thing to do and perhaps too large. Yet we heard from Members on the other side how important that was, and now President Clinton has come over to our way of thinking.

I think our colleagues on the other side will come over to our way of thinking on Medicare because we need to save this important program. Under the Republican plan Medicare will grow by \$86 billion over the next 7

years and we will institute reforms that are already working in the private sector.

In my home district of Worcester County, MA, 60 percent of my constituents are already in managed care. It works, it provides quality care for seniors under Medicare right now, and it can be used to reform our health care system and reduce the devastating rate of increase we are now seeing.

Mr. Speaker, pass this bill. It is the right thing to do for America.

A LITTLE EARLY CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

(Mr. SCHUMER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. Speaker, it was like a carnival yesterday here in the House. Step right up, step right up, called Barker NEWT GINGRICH as he called in the special interests for their cut of the pie in an effort to save this devastating Medicare program.

In fact, the Speaker said it was "a little like Christmas shopping", as the GOP started selling off parts of the Medicare package to special interests.

For everyone else Christmas shopping starts the day after Thanksgiving, but for the AMA, the pharmaceutical companies, the nursing home operators, Christmas shopping started this week. They got their goodies while the average senior paid: No reimbursement for nausea medicine after chemotherapy. Increases in copayments for loved ones in nursing homes.

How is that going to devastate families throughout America?

Well, the GOP should know something. Yes, they can make a lot of deals and do a lot of trading to save a bad package. They will win the vote, but they will lose the war.

SENIORS WILL HAVE CHOICES

(Mr. HOKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, the demagoguery that has developed over this issue is truly shameful. Let us get a couple of facts straight first.

No. 1, one of the things that each and every Medicare beneficiary has the right to choose is to stay in the program exactly as it is today, precisely as it is today, with no increases in copayments, my friend, the gentleman from New York [Mr. SCHUMER], with no increases in deductibles, with the same program, 31½ percent, no increase in the percentage of the part B premium. They will have the right to choose that.

They will also have the right to other choices, the same kind of choices that we have in this U.S. Congress, that every Federal employee has, and that people in the private sector have got. But if we want to see the depths, the

shameless depths to which the demagoguery and the rhetoric has gone to in this debate, last night I was on the floor and the bill was compared by the gentleman from New York to the attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor. Our bringing forward this bill was compared to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. How does the gentleman from Florida feel about that?

WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

(Mrs. SCHROEDER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, we have heard of wolves in sheep's clothing, and today that is what we see. Today we see all sorts of people from the other side of the aisle parade down here and say trust the party that fought tooth and nail not to have Medicare 30 years ago, but trust them now. Trust the party who had seniors arrested last week in this body when they tried to ask questions. Trust the party who has this 961 harmless page bill that none of them could pass a test on and they have had no hearings on, but trust them.

There is nothing harmful in here. Trust the party whose leader, Speaker GINGRICH says the main thing coming out of the session will be the tax cut for the rich. That is the crown jewel of this whole session and the seniors are going to get the gruel that is what we are doing today. The rich get the jewel, they get the gruel, but they keep saying trust their party and listen to the trustees. That is wrong.

MEDICARE NEEDS INTELLIGENT CHANGE

(Mr. LINDER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I believe it was G.K. Chesterton who said, "I still believe in liberalism, but, oh, there was a time when I believed in liberals."

The liberals today are losing their mind over losing control over the people's health care. It is not so much how much we spend, it is who decides. The Republicans want to give that decision to the people who use the health care. Let them have the same choices that we have in health care. Do you want to opt out of the 1965 style Blue Cross program? Even Blue Cross does not provide that kind of health care delivery system anymore, but we have locked our seniors into a 30-year-old system from which they cannot escape.

Do we want seniors to have the choices that we have? High deductible medical savings accounts, a managed care system, to stay with their current health care system? The old 30-year-old program does not allow any choices and it gives us a health care system that is increasing in cost at three

times the rate of inflation. We cannot sustain that, our seniors do not want to try to sustain that, we need to fix it.

PROPOSED CUTS IN MEDICARE WILL HURT SENIORS

(Mr. SANDERS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, there is no excuse for a \$270-billion cut in Medicare when the Republican leadership is simultaneously providing huge tax breaks for the rich, is building more B-2 bombers, and is maintaining \$125 billion in corporate welfare.

In my State, these cuts will result in over 80,000 elderly and disabled Vermonters paying higher premiums for a weakened Medicare system. As a result of the Republican plan, Medicare part B premiums will rise by \$312 in the year 2002.

Mr. Speaker, not only will seniors be paying more for a weakened system, but throughout our country and in rural States like Vermont our rural hospitals will be endangered. Fifty-five percent of the revenue that comes into our hospitals come from Medicare and Medicaid, and many of them will not be able to sustain these cuts.

PERMISSION FOR SUNDRY COMMITTEES AND THEIR SUBCOMMITTEES TO SIT TODAY DURING THE 5-MINUTE RULE

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the following committees and their subcommittees be permitted to sit today while the House is meeting in the Committee of the Whole House under the 5-minute rule:

Committee on Agriculture, Committee on Commerce, Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, Committee on International Relations, Committee on the Judiciary, Committee on Resources, Committee on Science, Committee on Small Business, and Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

It is my understanding that the minority has been consulted and that there is no objection to these requests.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2425, MEDICARE PRESERVATION ACT OF 1995

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 238 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution as follows:

H. RES. 238

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 1(b) of rule XXIII, declare the